



CITY OF COTTAGE GROVE
12800 Ravine Parkway South
Cottage Grove, Minnesota 55016
Council Chamber - 7:30 AM

August 25, 2026

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call
4. Adoption of Agenda
5. Approval of Minutes
 - A 6/02/2026 CVB Meeting Minutes
6. Presentations
 - A Q2 2026 Lodging Tax Collections
 - B 2026 Cottage Grove Food Truck Festival Update
7. Business Items
8. Workshop
 - A CVB Website Redesign
9. Comments
10. Adjournment



COTTAGE GROVE CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU
12800 RAVINE PARKWAY SOUTH
COTTAGE GROVE, MN 55016
COUNCIL CHAMBER - 7:30 A.M.

June 2, 2026

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau of the City of Cottage Grove, Washington County, Minnesota, held a regular meeting on June 2, 2026, at Cottage Grove City Hall, 12800 Ravine Parkway. Chairman Justin Olsen called the meeting to order.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Olsen asked everyone to please join him in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

Jaime Mann, Assistant to the City Administrator, called the roll: Chairman Justin Olsen-Here; Director Tony Khambata-Absent; Director Laurie Levine-Here; Director Erik Olsen-Here; Director Sarah Grecula-Here; Director Chris Reese-Arrived after Roll Call; Director Michael Haatvedt-Here.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Director Tony Khambata

STAFF PRESENT: Jennifer Levitt, City Administrator
Phil Jents, Communications Director
Jaime Mann, Assistant to the City Administrator

4. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion by Director Levine to adopt the agenda; second by Director Olsen. Motion carried: 5-0.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Staff Recommendation: Approve the February 24, 2026 Convention and Visitors Bureau Meeting Minutes.

Chairman Olsen asked if there were any changes or comments on the minutes; there were none.

Chairman Olsen said the February 24, 2026 Convention and Visitors Bureau Meeting Minutes will stand approved by unanimous consent.

6. PRESENTATIONS

A. 2026-2030 River Oaks Business Plan

Chairman Olsen said our friend, Dennis, from River Oaks is here to talk to us a little bit about the 2026-2030 River Oaks Business Plan.

Dennis Neitz, General Manager, said thank you for the opportunity to come in today and just share a little bit about River Oaks Golf Course and what we have going on. Yes, I'm here to talk about a Business Plan, but sometimes I like to kind of go backwards a little bit and share about the last five years and some of the accomplishments and goals that we have gone through.

At River Oaks, we've really tried to stand apart from a lot of different places. We like to be a place where people feel welcome to come within the community, but not just in the community but to bring in people from outside the community, especially for the economic development of this room here, *Discover Cottage Grove*, but that is something that we do truly look at is bringing people in.

And, so, River Oaks at an overall glance, I'd say we're four different things:

- 1) We really focus on the golf course, about 85% of our business comes through golfers in one form or fashion or other.
- 2) We also have our Event Center where we bring in different groups, such as weddings, events, school events. It's a great place to host events, up to about 200 guests.
- 3) We also focus on our Eagles Bar & Grill patio; I would say the patio is one of our new prevalent things, as in the past year we've been able to purchase some new patio furniture, which if you haven't been out there is excellent. It's a nice place to sit, it's got the greatest sunsets here in Cottage Grove for a patio.
- 4) Outdoor Entertainment: We've got bocce ball, we've got bag stuff that we do, so throughout all four areas, it's kind of an entertainment place to come for people within the community and people coming in from outside the community.

2021-2025 Accomplishments

- We've been able to pay down about \$250,000 of our Irrigation Project.
- We've had about \$525,000 in profit.
- We've been able to reinvest about \$835,000 back into the golf course in capital improvements.
- We've surpassed the \$1.1 million in sales in the clubhouse, which is a good number for us that we continue to strive to climb.
- We've had over 40,000 rounds of golf annually at River Oaks, last year we had about 45,000 rounds, so the growth has been strong.
- It's been about a 35% growth over the last five years.

Growth

That leads us into how we got there:

- Customer Service: Our standards are high. We want to make sure that when you come out to River Oaks that you're treated well, you have good customer service, the people are sharing the vision of what we have to offer.
- Expanded Leagues and Community Events: We've expanded some of our leagues and community events. When people come in now, we've got bocce ball, it starts tonight, it's three nights a week, and actually about half of our teams come from outside of Cottage Grove, which is kind of fun to get people in here.
- Elevated Food & Beverage Operation: Through different ways, our patio furniture and things like that, we're elevating our food and beverage operation. Our patio this year has been off to a great start in May, which is kind of fun to see. It's been something that we've been working on for quite some time.
- Strengthened Reputation as a Premier Destination: We've also been trying to strengthen our reputation, our course conditions have been great. We had a little bit of winter kill over this past winter, but our course conditions, compared to many of the other courses around here, is starting to elevate itself.
- Golf Architects Guiding Improvements: We worked with a few different golf course architects over the last couple years to help share a vision, and I'll share that here in just a little bit.

Vision 2026-2030

Our goal is to always strengthen the golf course, always to strengthen our position to bring people into our community. We're going to do that hopefully through:

- Enhancing our Practice Facilities: Our course is 35 years old now, and so there are a lot of improvements that have to continually be kept up on, such as cart paths, buildings, and our practice facilities are one of them. We are looking to go to a little bit more of an autonomous operation here, into the future, as many

operations are going. Many of the cities, such as Edina, have already adopted a lot of autonomous vehicles. It's not really to cut the costs of labor, because we want to take that labor and roll that into something that can help the customer out a little bit more, but it's to streamline our operation to make it more efficient. Autonomous is a good thing, actually having the mower go out every night, it just takes a little bit of cutting off the grass, which prevents how much chemicals we have to put down, so there's a lot of great things that go along with it. From enlarging our practice range for our customers to increasing a chipping and pitching area so that people can come out and utilize our facility in different ways is a huge and important part of what we do.

- **Patio Upgrades:** The second thing we're looking to do is to upgrade our patio. We have purchased new patio furniture in the last year, we've got some nice lights, the flowers on our patio are always amazing. We would like to put a covered roof over it so on days when we have the sun shining down, or a little bit of a mist or rain, or it's a little chilly out there, then we'd have the opportunity to be able to have a more comfortable experience for our guests, that is the highlight that we have in front of our clubhouse.
- **Course Modernization:** We have a course where it would be nice to have regular bathrooms out on the course, have an area where we can sell some food and beverages on the course to make it a little bit better experience. Also, things that go along with that would be looking at our bunkers and looking at our cart paths to make sure that they're current and being upgraded as our course is getting older. Like I said, we're in our 35th season, a lot of things in the golf industry after about 20 years start to break down, like our irrigation system did, and I can tell you that improvement that we made has paid dividends. But those are the things on the course itself that we're looking to upgrade.
- **Event Modernization:** You know, events are changing. We have a lot of different event venues in the City, actually 26 years ago when we opened the clubhouse, we might have had the VFW, we might have had the Majestic Ballroom open, and those have kind of changed. We've got Cedarhurst now being built, we've got Furber Farms, we've got Hope Glen, we've got a lot of different venues, and so we do have to keep up with event space and what it means. What that might look like is modernizing it a little bit inside, we'd like to maybe grow that to an outdoor pavilion so that we can have something outside, a combination, but looking at different ways to host different style events to meet the needs of people and their changing likes and dislikes of stuff that are going on.

Over the next five years, those are our goals for building stuff. In the next five years we want to continue our growth in golf, we want to continue our growth in events, but we want to make sure that we're always challenging the status quo and how we do things so that the customers who come to River Oaks have high expectations. In short, that would be a simple roadmap of what we're looking to do at River Oaks Golf Course, and I'll open it up to any questions from the Board.

Chairman Olsen said thank you very much, Dennis. That was clearly a condensed version of what we saw when we came down to the course, but it was also very informative. Does anybody have any questions or comments for Dennis about River Oaks currently and the vision for the future?

Director Olsen said the ancillary events that I've attended have been outstanding. The patio is wonderful, these are comments that I get from my neighborhood, let's call it, friends and family in Cottage Grove. So, compliments to you and your staff. The bocce ball leagues have been a hit, I've heard that from a number of people. I am a member of the bocce ball league, and we have an outstanding time, and that little area that you've enhanced has been a winner. So, compliments to your staff.

Dennis said thank you, and Director Olsen replied you're welcome.

Chairman Olsen said thank you for that.

Director Levine said and I'll add to that. So, with the Cottage Grove Area Chamber of Commerce, we are just planning our sixth golf tournament at River Oaks, and it has just been fantastic. I am not a golfer, so it's probably,

and I say this to Dennis every year, it's my hardest event to plan, and you all make it so easy. So, I love it, and the enhancements going forward would only make golf tournaments like ours even better. So, fantastic.

Dennis replied thank you.

Chairman Olsen said thank you, any other comments? No one else spoke.

Chairman Olsen said Dennis, if I may, Members of the Board may not know this, but recently, my company had an event at River Oaks, it's a store manager meeting for about 110 store managers, and various other folks and vendors came and all the rest of it. Last year, we did it at the HERO Center, this year we did it at River Oaks. The feedback was unbelievable, so positive. The space, the light, everybody loved the patio, the new patio furniture. It didn't hurt that we had a perfect day, but even something as simple as the sign on the road that had our logo on it and welcomed everybody to River Oaks, the hospitality was off the charts. I know I shared this with you privately, but I want to make sure people understand that for a municipal golf course, that's not normal, it's just not. Our municipal course is managed as though it were a private course. If you think about the Council's strategic direction, one of the things that we've leaned into for quite some time as it relates back to this body, the Convention and Visitors Bureau or *Discover Cottage Grove*, is we want our community to be a recreation destination. River Oaks is a huge component of that, along with the Ice Arena and our park and trail system, so when Dennis talks about reinvesting back into the facility, we've done quite a bit of that, and I agree we need to continue to do that. The other thing that's very unique about our course is its a municipal course that's profitable, again, that's just not normal. The taxpayers certainly support the course, but it pays for its own debt and it makes money, and that's something that I think we owe a huge debt of gratitude to Zac and Dennis and the team down at River Oaks for making that happen. Oddly enough, that's also true of our Ice Arena. So, really a great kind of snapshot of where we are, that new furniture is phenomenal, that was such a great investment. I've heard nothing but positives about the new carts from people who have been at the various tournaments. So, thank you so much for everything that you're doing. I can sense the passion every time I talk to you, and I know that we will continue to grow this facility and invest in this facility and continue to use it in a very positive way to bring people to our community. So, thank you for that.

Chairman Olsen asked does anybody else have anything else they wanted to add? No one spoke. Chairman Olsen told Dennis, all right, you're off the hook.

Dennis replied thank you, we appreciate your support.

B. 2026 Events Plan

Chairman Olsen said Alexa will be speaking on this.

Alexa Anderson, Communications Specialist, said Good Morning, Chairman and Members of the Board, this morning I have the pleasure of sharing our upcoming events with you:

Strawberry Fest, June 18-June 21: We will have a booth in the Strawberry Fields Marketplace again this year, and we welcome you guys to join us. If you have any free time, stop on by and help us promote *Discover Cottage Grove*. We will also have our Coloring Contest entries displayed there, we have those coming in until June 8, so next Monday, and we have quite a few, so we're pretty excited about that. We will also continue to promote this through paid advertisement, like we have in previous years; last year, we generated roughly 7,000 people to our website and a whole bunch more to the Strawberry Fest website as well.

Patio Week, July 12-July 18: This is our second ever Patio Week. We are currently in the process of outreach to businesses to form that lineup, and we are also working with TrueLens for a commercial-like video to help promote that in future years, with this being our second year. We will also push paid advertisements around this event, last year we reached just under 23,000 people with those paid advertisements.

Food Truck Festival, September 19: Looking into the fall, our Food Truck Festival is on September 19, from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. We have a great selection of food trucks that we're running through, we have a really great

lineup of music that we're super excited about, and some really great kid activities this year. We are still looking for sponsors, you can see the sponsorship opportunities on the screen here. If you have any questions about that, please feel free to reach out to our team, as we would be happy to discuss that with you. We will also push paid advertisements around this event as well. Last year, we generated just under 22,000 people for that event.

Looking Ahead to Other Activities:

Fourth of July Fireworks, Sunday, July 5: Hosted by the Cottage Grove Lions.

Labor Day Sports Festival, September 4-7: Hosted by One Family.

Hometown Holiday, Thursday, December 3: Right here at City Hall.

Holiday Train: We are still waiting on the final date for the Holiday Train, but we will be sure to pass that along to you as soon as we have it.

Alexa said with that, I would be happy to stand for any questions.

Chairman Olsen said well, thank you so much. There are a lot of fun things coming down the pipeline here in Cottage Grove. Are there any questions for Alexa on the event planning?

Director Reese asked where are you as far as food trucks? Last year we were looking at like putting out half on, how many have we secured so far for this year?

Alexa replied thank you for that question, I'll defer to Jaime on that.

Jaime said thank you, Chairman and Members of the Board, so I'll give you a comprehensive update at our next meeting in August. The committee has chosen 35 food trucks out of I believe it was 53 that applied; they're all currently in different stages of completion of paperwork, so I don't have a full update for you, but it is a great variety of food trucks that we had apply this year, so it'll be a great lineup.

Chairman Olsen said and remind me again, Jaime, but I know our first year we thought we may have had too many from a space management perspective. So, last year, we tried to cap it, was it at 35 last year?

Jaime replied yes, Chairman, 35 was our number.

Chairman Olsen said yep, and it worked out really well, hence the reason we're trying to keep it at that number, is that right?

Jaime replied yes, absolutely.

Director Olsen said we had also talked a couple of meetings ago regarding the food trucks last year versus this year, and whatever we decided is fine, but we talked about raising the fee due to the demand. If you have 53 trucks versus 35 acceptance, where did we land on that? How was that received? And it's something to think about for 16 months from now, in the future.

Jaime replied yes, thank you, Chairman and Members of the Board. We did look at competitive Food Truck Festival pricing, and we're pretty much right in line with what most of the Food Truck Festivals pay at this point, so we did not raise our pricing this year. We will continue to review every year to make sure we remain competitive for the food trucks that want to participate with us.

Chairman Olsen said excellent question, and interestingly enough, when I was at the One Family Festival on Memorial Day, that was a question that I asked the organizers, what did they charge for their various food trucks because they had quite a few as well. So, I think we're right in the sweet spot, to be frank. I really was gratified to hear that we don't appear to be overcharging, but we're also not giving anything away. So, great question. Anyone else?

Director Grecula said just a quick comment that I love that you're doing the Patio Week again, that's such a neat event that keeps us a little bit more up with the other cities.

Chairman Olsen said excellent, and we have a few more patios this year, too. Alexa said we do, yes, it's very exciting.

Chairman Olsen said so, out of curiosity, Alexa, I just mentioned One Family, I know that they do Memorial Day and they also do Labor Day, and I had the privilege of welcoming the folks to the Memorial Day event, along with State Representative Ethan Cha from Woodbury and our County Commissioner, Karla Bigham. I know that they had gotten a grant from I believe it was Marathon to help defray some of their costs and things. Is that something we're involved with helping them do, do you know? Does the City partner with them on that, or is that more kind of their own fundraising team? Are you aware, either way?

Administrator Levitt said well, Chairman Olsen and Members of the Board, you know that we have a very active mayor, and so, the mayor had connected with Marathon to let them know how successful this event was in our community and how much we needed their support to enhance the Public Safety element. And, so, Marathon was very generous in donating to that to provide the Public Safety presence that we needed there to ensure that everybody had a safe and fun event. So, I'm sure that partnership will probably continue.

Chairman Olsen replied good. I thought that was the case, and I know that the organizers were extremely pleased that Marathon came through with that donation, and it does not surprise me in the least that the mayor was involved with that because it was \$5,000, I mean, it was a good chunk of money to help defray some of their costs. The reason I asked is obviously, with Labor Day coming up, just making sure that we continue to do that, but the organizers for that festival were so incredibly grateful to the City for everything that we do. I know our Parks Department was there working really, really hard. I had the opportunity to speak to our two Parks employees, and that's probably something we'll talk about at budget time, too, is how do we make sure that we continue to support these various weekend events and try to do so, minimizing overtime and those sorts of things. All in all, Cottage Grove's definitely on the map for events, so really good stuff. Thank you for that.

C. Rentalscape - Short-Term Rentals Update

Chairman Olsen said we are going to go to our Communications Manager, welcome, Phil, to talk about the Rentalscape, some short-term rentals update.

Phil Jents said Chairman of the Board and Members of the Board, thank you, good morning. As Chairman Olsen pointed out, I'm here to talk about the Rentalscape, short-term rentals update. As many of you may recall, beginning about 2025, the City in partnership with Discover Cottage Grove or the CVB, began exploring the idea of this Rentalscape software.

The impetus of that is that over the years, there's been a noticeable increase in short-term rental activity in Cottage Grove, and staff began to wonder are we capturing those short-term rentals in terms of Lodging Taxes? Are those short-term rentals licensed properly through the City proper, and are they inspected and safe and above board, and all of those things. And Rentalscape from Deckard Technologies provides a way to more or less scan, if you will, sites like Airbnb and VRBO for short-term rentals in a certain geographic area. That is something that poses a unique challenge to staff or even just to regular individuals, who happen to be perusing those sites. When you find a property in a given area, you don't actually get an address until you book through that property. So, chasing down are they active, where are they exactly located? Going out and taking pictures and kind of cross referencing that with the listing on the short-term rental website poses some challenges, in terms of kind of finding who those properties are and making sure they're licensed and remitting appropriate taxes and so on and so forth.

So, Rentalscape goes out and does it for you, and so that is a joint venture between the CVB and the City's Community Development Department, specifically, our Code Enforcement Officer, Samantha Drewry. So, we thought it a good idea to give you a brief update on what Rentalscape is finding, how it's going, and maybe where it's going moving forward.

So, with that preamble, Rentalscape implementation began in 2025. To date, it has found:

- 38 short-term rentals that it has identified
- 11 were already licensed appropriately, 27 were not
- 15 of those did not require a license, and there are various reasons for that. It could be that property is owner-occupied or other factors that our Code Enforcement Officer looks at very closely.

- 10 of those either now do hold a license as a result of some of this work identifying those properties and sending out letters, and doing what Samantha Drewry does to make sure that they're getting licensed appropriately, or they are in the process of doing that.
- The remaining properties, speaking of being in the process, will receive a notice from the City regarding that licensure requirement.

When looking at kind of the multi-pronged approach that the City or specifically the CVB is doing to improve Lodging Tax collections, that could be development of a new hotel, it could be the very marketing efforts that we do through *Discover Cottage Grove*, and it could be through things like Rentalscape, and also the Minnesota Department of Revenue. As you know, the Department of Revenue began collecting Lodging Tax on behalf of the City last summer, last July, I believe, and the advantage of this multi-pronged approach is the Minnesota Department of Revenue has a better enforcement mechanism. You know, when a property receives a letter from the Department of Revenue that hey, you're not remitting taxes appropriately, people tend to look at that a little bit more seriously than other enforcement mechanisms. And, also, with sites like Airbnb, properties are being charged Lodging Tax collections more or less automatically, and so as long as they're listing on Airbnb, the Department of Revenue is catching those in terms of getting those Lodging Tax collections and then remitting those to the City appropriately.

When you factor in Rentalscape, what is nice about that software, in addition to all of the good things it's doing on the City side of things, which is making sure that they're licensed properly, inspected, safe, above board, collecting license revenues, all of those are good things and proper things. Moving forward, what the City will likely endeavor upon is probably quarterly, maybe more or less frequently as needed, depending on how many properties Rentalscape is identifying, is we will be sending a list of those properties that Rentalscape is finding to the Minnesota Department of Revenue. There's a very good chance that the Department of Revenue already is aware of those properties because they're collecting those taxes, more or less automatically, but we don't want to leave that to chance and assumption. So, we'll be sending a list of those properties, probably quarterly, to the Department of Revenue just to ensure that they're aware of them and they're tracking them and they're sending out enforcement letters if they need to, in terms of Lodging Tax collections.

With all of that, I am happy to report you know we wanted to figure out what is the net impact of all of this stuff: The CVB's marketing efforts, Rentalscape, the Minnesota Department of Revenue collecting Lodging Taxes on our behalf. Obviously, the hope there is that all of that is moving in the right direction, we're collecting more Lodging Taxes, we're doing all of the things we should be doing. We've seen a slight uptick in Lodging Tax collections between 2024 and 2025, to the tune of about \$1,000, \$993 in dollars and change. So, you know, we're not breaking the bank, but it is moving in the right direction, and I do believe it is a result of that multi-pronged approach.

Phil said so with that, I'm happy to stand for any questions regarding Rentalscape.

Chairman Olsen said okay, good information there. Does anybody have any questions for Phil on Rentalscape? It sounds like we're pleased with the partnership with the Minnesota Department of Revenue and collecting that data, first of all, and funding, second of all. So, that's a positive step, I think, for sure. Anything further?

Director Reese said as we've found these additional places, the short-term rentals, are we sending out like material about Cottage Grove to them, along with the notice that they need to be licensed, etc.? So that they can have things about Cottage Grove that are there for their short-term rentals, such as the amenities of the City and things like that?

Phil replied Chairman Olsen, Members of the Board, short answer is no, but that is a good idea. That is something that the CVB, in addition to sending those properties to the Department of Revenue to make sure we're getting those taxes, is we could come up with a one-pager, a pamphlet of some kind, that perhaps we could send those properties so that they're aware of various events around town, and they could maybe market themselves appropriately around those events. That's a really good point.

Chairman Olsen asked if there were any other questions, and none were asked.

D. CVB Website Redesign Update

Chairman Olsen said Phil, why don't you go ahead and take us through the Website Redesign Update.

Phil said Chairman Olsen, Members of the Board, thank you. As Chairman Olsen just said, I'm here to give you a brief update on the website. As you know, it's been a bit of a process going through the *Discover Cottage Grove* website redesign with our new vendor, W.A. Fisher, who you may recall from the last meeting when we approved that agreement with that vendor.

Just very briefly, because you got a lot of information about them at that previous meeting, but they very much specialize in Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) websites. So, in addition to finding a vendor who does really good work, really professional work around website design, we wanted to find one that does that but does it specifically for DMOs. There were a handful of vendors out there who do these types of websites as sort of a specialty, and W.A. Fisher rose to the top of the list, as you heard from the last meeting. They handle DMO websites all across the State, and they do a pretty remarkable job.

So, right now, we are in the preliminary design phase with W.A. Fisher. I am also happy to report that in addition to their expertise and professionalism on paper, that that has shown through in reality. They have been very responsive, very professional, giving us design elements that we're asking for, incorporating the proper fonts, color schemes, design elements like photos and graphics that we are submitting to them. In terms of responsiveness, I am also happy to report that for this very presentation, I needed something changed rather quickly, and I called our designer and got it changed within literally about 5-to-10 minutes. Now, it wasn't a huge deal, but that just speaks to the responsiveness, that I can just call them up, say hey, here's what I need, and it's done pretty lickety-split.

With that, looking at kind of a glimpse of that preliminary design, I should note moving forward from this preliminary design phase, we of course want feedback from the Board. Any questions, thoughts, concerns you might have about the preliminary design so that we can send those back to the designer. We've already sent our own edits and things that we need changed, and things that we're looking for. Moving forward, they'll go into then building out the full website. This is just the are we passing the smell check? Are we on the right track in terms of design? Yes or no? And then from there, they'll build out the full website, internal pages, etc.

Here you see the *Discover Cottage Grove* homepage with updated visuals, updated site map, and what have you. On the next slide, as you scroll down on the main homepage, so that is right below what you first see, you scroll down and see the remainder of the homepage. And then the very next slide, we start to see some of the internal, the sub-navigational headings will take you to the interior pages.

In terms of staff feedback, we are very happy with the responsiveness and work that W.A. Fisher has been doing. We're very happy with the preliminary design. Obviously, with any feedback that we continue to provide them or any feedback from the Board, we'd be more than happy to take that back to them. As they continue forward, we do anticipate with providing that feedback to W.A. Fisher, that the website should be substantially complete and getting pretty close to launch by end of Quarter 2 or maybe moving into Quarter 3, depending on how much feedback we send them and how much work is caused as a result.

So, with that, I'm happy to stand for any questions.

Chairman Olsen said okay, good. Any questions for Phil on the website redesign? Anyone? None were asked.

Chairman Olsen said I do have a couple. So, just to be clear with regard to the feedback loop, is the intent that the Board will be sent either a PDF or a PowerPoint or something featuring what is proposed, and then we will provide feedback in a written format? Did you want to do a workshop? How did you want to get the feedback?

Phil replied Chairman Olsen, Members of the Board, excellent question. I think moving forward from today, one way that we could go about that is send you either a link or screenshots, like in a PDF, and you could mark that up. You could write comments you have in an email. Either way works for me, personally. As we get a more, we'll call it substantially-designed website, I'd be happy to have a special meeting or a workshop or something where we can look at that in more detail and then provide feedback kind of in real time during that workshop or special meeting or regular meeting for that matter. But like immediately, I think it would be probably convenient for everyone to

send either a link or a PDF with some screenshots and you could mark it up or provide written feedback, either way works.

Chairman Olsen replied yeah, I like that idea. Is there any feedback from the Board on that?

Director Levine said yeah, that'd be great.

Chairman Olsen said yeah, it's easier to provide that feedback as we go along, in my view, versus waiting until you have something sort of packaged and then make everybody go back and redo it.

Phil said I agree.

Chairman Olsen said so, I think these periodic check-ins might be nice. Again, whether it's a link to a draft or something like that, however you choose to do it. And I would request that we have a substantial conversation in a workshop at our next meeting in August just to put a pin in it and ensure that everybody's on the same page because there's going to be various opinions; but we want to make sure that we measure twice and cut once, get it right. But, so far, I mean, it seems like we're pretty happy with the new vendor, so that's great news.

Phil said we are indeed, yes.

Chairman Olsen asked does anybody have any additional feedback on the website redesign? There was none, so Chairman Olsen said okay, perfect. Thank you so much for that. I'll look forward to that email.

E. 2026 Q1 Lodging Tax Collections

Chairman Olsen said I also know you have some information for us on the Q1 Lodging Tax Collections.

Phil said that is correct. Thank you, Chairman Olsen, Members of the Board. So, you heard a little bit of a reference about Lodging Tax Collections earlier, when we talked about Rentalscape. So, here we're ready to give you an update on the 2026 Quarter 1 Lodging Tax Collections.

As you know, we use a 63% occupancy rate when calculating Lodging Tax Collections. Of course, when factoring in Rentalscape and Minnesota Department of Revenue, we're looking at Lodging Tax Collections to see where they're moving; are they staying stagnant, are they moving upward, downward, and why?

So, for Quarter 1 in 2026, as you see there, \$14,560.76 is our Quarter 1 2026 Lodging Tax Collections. At a previous meeting, a great question was asked, where do Quarter 1 of this year, how does that compare to the same quarter of last year? And, again, are we moving up, down, or are we staying flat? So, we can start digging into the why behind that. So, comparing Quarter 1 of 2025 and 2026, in 2025, you see \$13,194, and Quarter 1 of this year \$14,560.76, which is a growth of about \$1,366, or 10.36%. So, again, that multi-pronged approach of our marketing efforts, Rentalscape, Minnesota Department of Revenue, and I, of course, would be remiss to not include the very businesses who, of course, are bringing people to town, the events that are bringing people to town. The CVB is but a small, hopefully important aspect of all of that, but I'd be remiss not to obviously give credit where credit is due; the venues, the lodging establishments, the events, they're driving that as much as anyone.

Phil said with that, I'm happy to stand for any questions.

Chairman Olsen said perfect, thank you. Any questions for Phil on the Lodging Tax Collections for Q1? He said I do have one myself. It's my understanding that the Country Inn & Suites has undergone an ownership change, is that right?

Phil replied Chairman of the Board, Members of the Board, yes, that is correct.

Chairman Olsen said okay, so, have we developed a relationship with the new owner and are comfortable with kind of what we're doing with them in terms of continuing the relationship on the Lodging Tax, continuing the relationship in terms of, you know, hosting people who come to the community, etc.? I know hotels have been at the very forefront of our marketing efforts for a good couple of years now, at least, but it seems as though Country Inn & Suites at least at the minute is always busy, there's always people there. So, I just want to make sure that we have a good relationship with the new owner.

Phil replied yes, Chairman, Members of the Board, I am happy to report that our Economic Development Manager, Nate Carlson, has had some conversations with the new owner that I am hearing have gone very well, and so that's good to know. He has also made kind of a soft introduction of the Convention and Visitors Bureau to

that new owner; we've been exchanging emails, trying to find a date to line up schedules, I'm sure they're very busy and some of that's challenging, but we are working on trying to get out to the hotel to get a tour and meet them and do that ourselves as a CVB. So, more to come on that.

Chairman Olsen said good, perfect. Any other questions? None were asked.

7. BUSINESS ITEMS

A. 2027 Preliminary Budget

Chairman Olsen said Phil, it looks like we continue to enjoy your supreme presentation skills on the 2027 Preliminary Budget.

Phil replied Chairman, Members of the Board, thank you for that. For better or worse, you've got me for a lot of this morning. So, yes, the 2027 Preliminary Budget approval is here, budget season is well under way, and we're happy to talk about the preliminary budget. Just to note, of course that word preliminary, as you see this preliminary budget or as you've seen it in the packet, that is somewhat subject to change as we get the final approval from the Board later this year. We can't predict the future, but I guess it is technically possible that some of those numbers could change as we work with our Finance Department and as circumstances change. Nevertheless, we've got cause for some optimism with the preliminary budget for 2027.

So, with that, and again, not to be a broken record, but you know that we base our Lodging Tax projections on that 63% occupancy rate, which for 2027 puts us in at \$71,550 in Lodging Tax collections. Visitor Guide ad sales at \$4,500, and then the all important marquee event, the Food Truck Festival, at \$23,900, so that gives us a rough picture for our revenue forecast in 2027.

On to the expenses side, as you also know, we break out expenses across marketing and operating expenses. What you're seeing here are the Marketing Expenses; I will not bore you by reading every single line on the slide here, but just to note things like collateral development and printing, that's the Visitor Guide, we have seen some favorable quotes come back for the Visitor Guide. As you also know, coming out of the CVB's Strategic Plan last year, our graphic designer, Courtney Pirsig, found efficiencies and reduced the page count with the Visitor Guide, focusing on a Visitor Guide that has impact but isn't too full of things that we maybe don't need in a Visitor Guide. So, when looking at Visitor Guide efficiency, favorable quotes, that number used to be higher in previous budgets, and it's looking like in 2027, we might be able to save some money there.

On the Operating side, again I won't bore you with every single line here except to note that the Communications Specialist's salary and benefits, that \$24,600, that is 10% of two Communications Specialists, that's not like \$24,000 for one person's salary, that's just 10% of two of those positions. And then again, finding efficiencies through the budget, things like Continuing Education, that's like attending the Explore Minnesota Tourism Conference, the Minnesota Tourism Association Annual Meeting. We again looked at our travel and training plans to find efficiencies: What is working for us and what is not? Not continuing to do things simply because we've always done them if they aren't really working for us, can we remove them and find better ways to do that? So, some of those numbers are a little bit smaller than we've seen in other years because, again, we want to focus our efforts and make every attempt to spend money wisely while also looking to balance the budget.

Phil said with that, I'm happy to report that our 2027 Preliminary Budget is balanced. As you can see there, our revenue projection and expense projection line up. Again, this is the preliminary budget, so of course numbers could change, maybe priorities change based on feedback from the Board; nevertheless, we're trying to be good stewards of these dollars, we want to not be in the red, so to speak, and find ways to spend money wisely and balance the budget. So, there is a motion before you, and of course, I am happy to stand for any questions.

Chairman Olsen said thank you, 2027, and it's only June of 2026, but wow, we're already moving into 2027. Good information there, love the idea that we're balanced, that's always a good thing. Does anybody have any questions for Phil on the budget? As there were none, Chairman Olsen said I'll look for a motion to approve.

Recommendation, By Motion:

Approve the 2027 Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau preliminary budget.

Motion by Director Grecula to approve the 2027 Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau preliminary budget; second by Director Olsen. Motion carried: 6-0.

Chairman Olsen said that motion carries. Thank you, Phil.

8. WORKSHOP - None.

9. COMMENTS

Director Reese said as we were looking ahead at the golf course presentation, are there any thoughts on how we might be thinking about rebranding some of the things throughout the City, like the golf course? I like the sign and everything, but it looks like a municipal golf course, and I don't know if that's what we're trying to make it look like, but if we're planning on updating signage or any of the branding around the golf course because it's very visible, to align better with the *Discover Cottage Grove*?

Chairman Olsen replied interesting question, yeah, any thoughts on that from our staff? No? Okay. So, to be clear, what you're asking is are we looking at upgrading the look of the signage, or are you actually suggesting potentially rebranding in name as well?

Director Reese replied not necessarily name, but it was brought up several times that the course is 35 years old, and the branding of it looks 35 years old. So, something a little bit more modern, you know we've got right in front of us the *Discover Cottage Grove* logo, of being able to update and have the branding look like the facility that it is.

Chairman Olsen said so, a redesign of sorts? Director Reese replied possibly.

Chairman Olsen said I know that when we, as a Council, had a workshop recently at River Oaks to go through some of the same information that we saw this morning, we had a little bit more detail, and one of the things that was discussed was the fact that just upon appearances, the facility looks like a 35-year-old facility in its architectural design. So, one of the things that Dennis was sharing with us was a vision about opening up the front and changing the entryway to look a little more modern in terms of its design and its functionality. I think the suggestion that we could potentially update our signage to make it appear to be more modern could certainly go hand in hand with something like that. So, that's a very good suggestion. I don't know that we'd ever want to rebrand the name, as there's a lot of cache with that name, and it's obviously very well known, but in terms of making the visuals pop a little more, and I know communications is your thing, so it doesn't surprise me at all that it comes from you to suggest that. I think that's a really good thought and something we can definitely take under advisement. Does that answer your question, by the way?

Director Reese replied yes.

Chairman Olsen said a couple comments from me, so I know that recently our Economic Development Authority did their annual trip to Las Vegas for the International Council of Shopping Centers Convention (ICSC). Our City Administrator was a part of the contingent that went, along with our mayor, and Council Member Garza went this year. I just wanted to first of all, make sure people understand what we do and why we do that. Yes, it's an EDA function, but it certainly speaks to the way in which we market the City. Having done this myself and been part of this, I can tell you that when we go to these events as a community, people know who we are. It's interesting when you meet with various developers and end users and brokers and things, in the early days when we used to do this, Director Reese remembers because he was part of the EDA for several years, we kind of were tugging on people saying hey, here's who we are, this is what we do, we'd really like to talk to you. Now, people actually know who we are, Cottage Grove's on the map, they want to be here, and it's just a question of can we find them the right spot and make the right deal. So, that's very encouraging. I mentioned earlier that we've been working very hard for the last couple years to try to enhance our lodging offerings in the community, and it's my understanding there was some of that conversation in last year's visit to ICSC, which is great news. That trip is funded through the

Economic Development Authority Trust Fund, and so that is not taxpayer money. That money is invested back into the City by a local business who has been contributing to that fund for many years, and so, that money is intended for use in marketing the City and helping to enhance and develop our business community here in the City. So, when we send people to these events, that's all paid for through the Economic Development Authority's Trust, and that's exactly the intended use of those funds. From what I understand, in talking to the mayor and I'm going to ask our City Administrator to just give us a 30-second snippet here if she's willing, it sounded like it was a busy year, a lot of good meetings. You know we've had numerous businesses that have landed in Cottage Grove over the years as a result of these efforts, and it sounds like the meetings this year were robust and frequent. I think you were tracking your steps, and you put several miles on in walking through the Las Vegas Convention Center, which is bigger than some cities I've been to. So, I just want people to know that is a marketing effort in addition to helping us grow our business community and more specifically, as it relates to the Convention and Visitors Bureau, the lodging offerings that we have here in the City; as I mentioned, and Alexa told us earlier, we have all these events that come to town, and where do people stay, where do they eat, where do they sleep? All of those things matter. Jennifer, did you have anything you wanted to add at all on the trip? I know I didn't prep you ahead of time, so.

Administrator Levitt replied well, Chairman Olsen, and Members of the Board, I think you hit the nail on the head. It's about marketing, making ourselves known and available, but it's more than that, right? Because we had really important conversations with a lot of hotel franchises to talk about our site to obviously promote that, but I think for us it was also the success with the retailers. Knowing that there's a lot of retail interest that will probably pop in 2026 here in our community, that is exciting. I think as Council Member Olsen mentioned, they know Cottage Grove, we're on the map, and so it's exciting to see that, which is also going to help spur, I think, the Shoppes at Cottage View area and the Innovation Village area. One thing, too, you might not know, the bonding dollars that we've been asking for came through for 100th Street, so that will connect 100th Street from Jamaica to Highway 61, with a bridge over the railroad. This investment is really critical to grow our Business Park, but it's also important to be able to grow our retail area along the West Point Douglas corridor. So, you'll start to see construction of that in 2027, which really starts to set the stage for retail growth, businesses along that corridor in 2028. So, like I said, there's a lot on the horizon, and we're positioned very well in regards to that. So, thank you for allowing me to do the update.

Chairman Olsen replied no, thank you very much, and I was going to mention the bonding dollars, too, I'm glad you brought that up. That was a heavy lift, we had several people from the City, including the mayor, at the Capitol more than once this year, working with all of the various legislators on trying to secure those bonding dollars for that project, which is a partnership between the County and the City and obviously the State with bonding. That, too, is going to be critical as it relates to ensuring that people have access to those areas and access is what equals development. In case you weren't aware, the City Council also recently approved the second Kwik Trip site for the City of Cottage Grove, and everybody's wondering when the first site's going to get off the ground; what we've been told is construction this year, hopefully be open in the fall. Obviously, those things are fluid as it relates to them being able to work through whatever weather comes our way and acquisition of materials and so on and so forth, but that site, down off of 95th Street, should be popping up pretty quickly. The second site is down further on Highway 61, and it has also been approved. So, we're excited to talk about that.

That's all I've got for comments. Again, does anybody have anything else?

Director Reese said just one quick question because I was going to ask about the hotel and the trip to Las Vegas. In the conversations you have had with them, were they agreeing with the numbers that we were showing, that there is a need for additional hotel space?

Administrator Levitt said Chairman Olsen and Members of the Board, in regards to that, we had HBS do a study in regards to our capacity; HBS is one of the leading companies in analyzing hotel market studies, and so they carry a lot of weight. So, when HBS says we can support 90 business-style hotel rooms, they do take note of that, and they're not disagreeing. And, so, we're definitely seeing some of the large brand names interested, it's just trying to figure out how to make that become a reality.

Chairman Olsen said perfect, good question. And, yes, I can guarantee the folks in our Business Park, etc. are helping us by letting people know that they're bringing people in on the regular for meetings, training, onboarding,

you name it, not to mention the expansions in the Business Park. All of that equals a need for additional lodging, so we have a compelling story to tell, that's for sure.

Chairman Olsen said all right, with no further comments, I will seek a motion to adjourn this meeting.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Director Levine made a motion to adjourn; Director Haatvedt seconded. Motion carried: 6-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:56 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Phil Jents
Communications Director

/jag



TO: Board of Directors, Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau

FROM: Phil Jents, Communications Manager

DATE: August 12, 2026

RE: 2026 Q2 Lodging Tax and Revenue Collection

Discussion

2026 Q2 Lodging Tax Collections

The 2026 budget used a 63% occupancy rate when calculating our 2026 lodging tax projections. The Minnesota Department of Revenue (DOR), on behalf of the City of Cottage Grove, has collected Q2 lodging tax and received the following amounts:

2026 Q2 Lodging Tax Collections for the City of Cottage Grove

Rental Month	Gross Revenue Amount	Administrative Cost	Net Amount Paid
April	5,391.00	(48.52)	5,342.48
May	6,434.00	(57.91)	6,376.09
June	7,962.00	(71.66)	7,890.34

The net total of the 2026 Q2 lodging tax collections received from the DOR is \$19,608.91. The ongoing administrative cost of the DOR lodging tax collections for Q2 was \$178.09 (or roughly >1% of the lodging tax collections).

For comparison:

- 2025 Q2 Lodging tax collections were: \$19,372.00
- 2026 Q2 Lodging tax collections were: \$19,608.91

Recommendation:

Receive 2026 Q2 lodging tax collection information.



TO: Board of Directors, Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau

FROM: Jaime Mann, Assistant to the City Administrator

DATE: August 21, 2026

RE: Food Truck Festival Update

Discussion

Discover Cottage Grove is well on the way to planning our 4th Annual Cottage Grove Food Truck Festival. The event will take place at Kingston Park on Saturday, September 19 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Food Trucks

The goal this year is to have 35 food trucks. So far this year, there are 26 food trucks that have completed all steps of their paperwork and have paid their entry and license fees. Another 9 food trucks are in various stages of paperwork completion or are just waiting on submitting their payment. We do still have a waitlist of interested trucks if any of the 9 outstanding trucks fail to complete their applications or payment. Below is the list of food trucks that have completed all their paperwork and paid their fees.

Food Trucks	
Amazing Momo	Minnesnowii Shave Ice
Bunk House	Olakino Shakes
California Dip & Eat	Original Hockey Mom Brownies
D&D Goodies	Paella Depot
Dearest Baker Macarons	Sambusa Samosa
Deep Roots Concessions	Shoo-Ga Cane Juice Bar and Eatery
Eggroll Queen	Smith Brothers BBQ
Frios Gourmet Pops	Thai Thai Street Food
Grand-Line Donburi	Thai Boat 89
Hydration Shuttle LLC	Twin Cities Tacos
Inferno Wood Fired Pizza	Whiskey Creek BBQ
iPierogi	YANG YUMM
Lucinda's Lemonade & More	Yum Yum Truck

Sponsorships

The goal this year was to get \$8,000 in sponsorship to help cover the expense of hosting and promoting the event. This year, we are currently at \$8,500 in paid sponsorships. While sponsors are still being solicited, there are currently 12 paid and in-kind sponsors of the event.

Sponsorships	
Bolton & Menk	Platinum Sponsor
Curbside Productions (In-Kind)	Platinum Sponsor
North Star Sheets	Platinum Sponsor
SoWashCo CARES (In-Kind)	Platinum Sponsor
Stantec	Platinum Sponsor
Tennis Sanitation (In-Kind)	Platinum Sponsor
Van Meter	Platinum Sponsor
3M	Gold Sponsor
American Solutions (In-Kind)	Silver Sponsor
Gateway Fiber	Silver Sponsor
Graphic Design, Inc. (GDI)	Silver Sponsor
River Oaks	Silver Sponsor

Marketplace

This is the third year of hosting the vendor marketplace at the Food Truck Festival. The goal this year is to have 21 vendors participating in the event which will run along the path to the north parking lot at Kingston Park. So far, there are 20 vendors with paperwork completed and additional eight in some stage of paperwork completion. Marketing is still underway to attract more vendors. Below is a list of vendors that have completed all their paperwork and paid their vendor fee.

Marketplace Vendors	
beem Light Sauna	Michael for CG Council
Little Big Crystals	Northern Pine Co. Boutique
Burn Boot Camp	Once upon a Wish Travel
Colorburst Creations 3D	Pet Wants
Cottage Grove Area Chamber of Commerce	Prairie Home Stone
Dance By Kris	Renewal by Andersen
Gateway Fiber	Shields Lake Cheesecake
Gray Duck Syrup Co.	Squeaky Services
Jeremy Bolen for Washington County Sheriff	T&M Creations LLC
KM Designery	Wolf River Electric
Little Ritters Designs	

Entertainment

The CVB is excited to announce the musical lineup for the Food Truck Festival. There are two new bands coming to perform this year along with a new sound production company. Katelyn White will open the day from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Anti Skip Protection will be playing from 3 to 6 p.m. Curbside Productions is our new sound production company this year that will be providing lighting to enhance the stage visuals this year. In addition to that, Anti Skip will also have old 90s music videos playing on a projector during their performance

Other Activities

There are a few other activities going on during the Food Truck Festival. The Strawberry Fest Ambassadors will be back again this year with carnival games for the kids during the event. New this year, we have O2B Kids that will be hosting a kid's activity area next to the marketplace.

In advance of the event, The Mississippi River Valley Beyond the Yellow Ribbon is hosting a Walk/Run/Ruck for Heroes at Kingston Park. More details can be found on their Facebook page along with how to register for the event.

Discover Cottage Grove Booth

The CVB will be hosting a booth near the north entrance to the parking lot where swag will be handed out. The Board is invited to volunteer anytime between 10:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. to support the Discover Cottage Grove booth. The giveaways will be a combination of items that were purchased in past years to support events that the CVB attended.

Recommendation

Receive the 2026 Cottage Grove Food Truck Festival information.



TO: Board of Directors, Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau

FROM: Phil Jents, Communications Manager

DATE: August 12, 2026

RE: CVB Website Redesign Update

Discussion

As part of the CVB's strategic plan, the Discover Cottage Grove website, hosting service, and design has been under a redesign by W.A. Fischer.

City of Cottage Grove staff solicited feedback from various City departments, researched several other DMO websites, and consulted with W.A Fischer on the best approach to the new CVB website.

The team at W.A Fischer has collectively 60 years' experience combined in web and marketing experience in the tourism industry specifically, they have worked with other well-established DMOs in Minnesota.

The newly designed CVB website takes into account a fresh and modern design aesthetic, accessibility best practices, providing interesting content designed to inspire a visit, and better embracing SEO within copy across the site.

City staff are happy to report a very positive experience working with an incredibly talented, professional, and prompt team at W.A Fischer. While staff are monitoring the project closely, things are looking great so far.

At the CVB board meeting on June 2, 2026, a presentation showing updated design elements and a draft of the redesigned website was given so that board members could see the direction this project is going.

Following that meeting, the preliminary design was also sent to the board for feedback. Responses to that design were positive and supportive.

At this time, staff are looking for approval of the website, and to transition into launching the site after appropriate notice has been given to our current website host.

With approval from the CVB board, the new site could launch by no later than the end of Q3.

Recommendation:

Receive update on CVB Website Redesign.